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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 28 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, dated 27 March 2014, regarding the twenty-seventh round of the Geneva international discussions (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kaha **Imnadze**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 28 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the twenty-seventh round of the Geneva international discussions

The twenty-seventh round of the Geneva international discussions was held on 26 March 2014. The participants in the Geneva discussions took part, in their individual capacity, in the two Working Groups, the first focusing on security and stability in the occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, and the second on the issues related to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their permanent residence in the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia. The discussions were co-chaired by the representatives of the European Union, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and attended by participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States. The Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, as well as representatives of the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali occupation regimes, took part in the twenty-seventh round of the Geneva discussions.

On 25 March, an information session was held, on "public health issues". The invited expert familiarized the participants with the principal determinants of health, including the importance of access to health services. In the course of the meeting within Working Group I, the alarming security situation on the ground — continued build-up of the military infrastructure, military training, violations of the airspace controlled by the Georgian Government, armed attacks and increased practices of kidnapping, as well as other provocative incidents — were brought to the attention of the co-Chairs.

In the framework of Working Group I, the Georgian participants raised their serious concern over the resumption of the installation of barbed-wire fences and other artificial obstacles by the Russian occupation forces along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region. Since February 2014, Russia's illegal activities on the sovereign territory of Georgia in flagrant breach of the norms and principles of international law and the Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008 have been resumed in the villages of Atotsi and Ghogheti of the Kareli district after being temporarily suspended during the Sochi Olympics. This provocative policy poses a serious threat to the security situation on the ground, causes a humanitarian crisis and does not contribute to the de-escalation of relations between Georgia and Russia. After our numerous calls upon the Russian Federation to reverse its destructive actions against Georgia and fulfil the Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008, we strongly appeal to the international community to activate its diplomatic and political clout in the face of the ongoing provocations and address the security and humanitarian consequences of these alarming developments. The present security context in the occupied regions of Georgia underscores the particular importance of the reinforced presence of the European Union Monitoring Mission and stresses the necessity of ensuring the Mission's access to both regions in line with its mandate.

During the twenty-seventh round, the participants addressed one of the central items of the agenda pertaining to the non-use of force. Georgia remains fully committed to the Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008, stressing the non-use of force, which is continuously disregarded by the Russian Federation. Georgia's commitment has been further strengthened by its unilateral legally binding non-use of force pledge, undertaken in 2010 and reiterated by the Parliament of Georgia in 2013. During the last few rounds, Georgian participants have been constructively engaged in the process of drafting, on the expert level, a draft statement by the participants in the Geneva international discussions on the non-use of force, initiated by the co-Chairs. We have spared no effort to advance the drafting process, while clearly stressing that this statement should in no way substitute for a legally binding commitment from the Russian Federation on the non-use of force. Today, in the context of the mounting assertiveness of the Russian Federation aimed at preventing neighbouring countries from seeking their free foreign policy choice, and violating their territorial integrity and political independence, its legally binding non-use of force commitment in relation to Georgia remains imperative; it would constitute a vital mechanism averting Moscow's further aggression.

Furthermore, in the light of the alarming developments in the region, Georgia appeals to the co-Chairs and their respective organizations to double their efforts with the aim of ensuring the establishment of international security arrangements. Only the creation of valid and effective international mechanisms in the occupied regions can safeguard Georgia's unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty.

In Working Group II, Georgian participants brought to the attention of the co-Moderators the persisting violations of human rights in the occupied Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions and focused on the concrete humanitarian consequences of Russia's illegal activities along the occupation line and in the adjacent areas. In addition, concrete examples of the restriction of freedom of movement and the right to education and health have been extensively discussed. It was stressed that local residents, regardless of their ethnic origins, should exercise their social, economic and cultural rights, and, inter alia, enjoy freedom of movement, right to education in their native language and health care. To this end, the Georgian participants placed great emphasis on the importance of the creation of human rights monitoring mechanisms in the occupied regions.

Within Working Group II, the Georgian participants emphasized the importance of preserving the monuments of cultural and historic heritage located in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia. To take concrete steps in this direction, the discussions focused on the possibility of establishing a joint expert group.

The twenty-eighth round of the Geneva international discussions will be held on 17 and 18 June 2014. Georgia attaches immense value to the participation of the Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia in the European External Action Service, Mr. Luis Felipe Fernández de La Peña, in the discussions during the twenty-seventh round, which constitutes an additional demonstration of the strong engagement of the European Union in conflict resolution and its steady role in peace and security in Georgia. Georgia once again welcomes the participation of the Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Angelo Gnaedinger, and is confident that his personal input, as well as the contribution of the Swiss side to the discussions, will be of valuable importance. The Georgian participants are committed to further continuing their constructive cooperation with the co-Chairs with the aim of ensuring substantive discussions in both Working Groups.